



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

University realities

Citation for published version:

Cameron, E 2017, 'University realities: the Inverness Campaign to establish Scotland's fifth university', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, vol. 67, pp. 9-50.

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Published In:

Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact openaccess@ed.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



**UNIVERSITY REALITIES¹:
THE INVERNESS CAMPAIGN TO ESTABLISH
SCOTLAND'S FIFTH UNIVERSITY**

PROFESSOR EWEN A. CAMERON

6th December 2013

The long campaign to establish the institution known as the University of the Highlands and Islands had many twists, turns and moments of disappointment prior to its successful conclusion. Despite this there was a certain consistency in the essential argument in favour of the new institution: it was to be a different type of institution from the other Scottish universities. In the latest formulation, developed from the early 1990s, its distinctiveness was to be based on multi-campus organisation, use of video-conference technology to deliver teaching to remote locations; an attempt to attract a different type of student population and foundations resting on the existing network of Further Education Colleges across the region. Above all, it was to be a University *of* the Highlands and Islands, by implication, also, a University *for* the Highlands and Islands.² One of the principal academic advisors to the UHI project in its initial phase in the early 1990s argued:

A regional university might be glibly defined as being of its region and not just in its region. It is there to serve its region and its peoples as a centre or centres of the higher education appropriate to that place and time. ...The rapid growth everywhere of further and higher education has prompted many towns and cities, hitherto regarded as outside the university framework, to consider coming inside and aboard.³

One of the objectives of this paper will be to analyse the principal forerunner of the UHI campaign, that of the 1960s, in the light of this idea of the university as an agency of regionalism and even regional development and modernisation.

One piece of salesmanship for the idea of a modern University of the Highlands and Islands hints at failures of earlier campaigns by arguing, possibly correctly, that a university of Inverness 'would not have met the needs of the more remote communities'. They argued, less convincingly, that Information and Communications Technology provided a panacea for reducing the capital costs of the modern university and that it would provide 'more effective and efficient' means of teaching and learning than the 'expensive and outmoded features of the older traditional universities'.⁴ This tendency towards caricature and false dichotomies was one of the characteristics of the early stage of the UHI project.⁵ The campaign begun in the Highland Regional Council in the early 1990s was not, however, the first attempt to establish a University in the Highlands. The focus of this paper will be on the events of the 1960s, a period of expansion in the British University system, although earlier expressions of the idea of a university in the Highlands will be noted.

The campaign of the 1960s was not successful but it can help us to reflect on a number of historical issues. The first is the distinctive atmosphere around higher-education policy making in the 1960s. This was a period of expansion that began in the late 1940s and the establishment of University College of North Staffordshire, later the University of Keele, one of the few proposals for new institutions from this period to be accepted by the University Grants Committee. This institution had a Scottish connection in the form of its first Principal, A.D. (Sandie) Lindsay, and elements of its curriculum and four-year degree structure.⁶ The period of expansion, then, was from the late 1940s to the late 1970s. It was initiated prior to the Report of the Robbins Committee and it ended before the election of the Conservative government in 1979, to refer to the oft-cited heroes and villains of this process, although the agency of both in accelerating existing trends was very significant. Further, analysing the 'university question' also helps us to deal with historical problems relating to the development of

the Highlands and Islands in the post-war period. As will be shown here, the arguments put forward by those advocating a University in Inverness in the 1960s placed a great deal of emphasis on its potential contribution to the regional economy. This was a major issue of debate at the highest levels of government in this period. In a Highland context it is most often referred to in connection with the establishment of the Highlands and Islands Development Board by the incoming Labour government in 1965 but the notion of a major intervention in Highland regional development had been under active consideration by the Conservative government in the late 1950s and early 1960s.⁷ The relationship between the arguments for a University and for wider Highland development are related but in a paradoxical way. On the one hand the interest of the central government in the twin problems of University expansion and Highland development provided an opportunity to the Highland higher-education campaigners.

On the other hand, as the University question moved from policy-making to policy-implementation, it became clear that the emphasis on economic development as a key argument in favour of the Highland university was not necessarily helpful to the campaign. Although the emphasis on the prospects for the putative university's contribution to the Highland economy might be seen, in retrospect, as one of the Inverness campaigners' errors it was a virtuous and explicable error given the nature of the discussion about the Highland economy at the time. Although there was little sign that the Inverness campaigners investigated this issue in much depth there seem to be reasonable grounds for arguing, as the campaigners assumed, that a university would have been a positive economic actor in the region. Although research on this question is limited, and was even more so in the early 1960s, the studies that have been undertaken in widely varying contexts generally conclude that the presence of a university is of benefit to the local economy. There are a range of assumptions and caveats embedded in this paraphrase of the research but it has been noted, and this is

particularly relevant in the Highland case, that a university often provides a boost to the young adult population cohort that is often most inclined to migrate or emigrate. In the Highlands of the early 1960s a university is unlikely to have competed for skilled labour to the detriment of other industries; indeed, it is possible that it may have operated to attract other high functioning service and scientific industries to the area. It also seems likely that a university would have stimulated in-migration of skilled staff and their families.⁸

Although university policy went through massive shifts from the expansion of the 1960s to the contraction of the early to mid 1980s followed by further expansion it is unlikely that a Highland university, in contrast to, say, a pulp mill or aluminium smelter, would have closed with massive loss of jobs. Nevertheless, the evidence suggests that these factors were not uppermost in the minds of the policymakers charged with the task of deciding the location of universities in Britain in the early to mid 1960s.⁹

The campaign of the 1960s was the most promising attempt to set up a university in the Highlands but it was not the first. Indeed, during the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the idea was canvassed in a number of different contexts. As early as 1653 Sir Thomas Urquhart of Cromarty, in his grand plan for the 'furtherance of industry' and the development of the town of Cromarty, wished to:

Encourage men of literature, and exquisite spirits for invention, to converse with us for the better civilising of the country, and accommodating it with a variety of goods, whether honest, pleasant or profitable; by virtue whereof, the professors of all sciences, liberal disciplines, arts fictive and factive, mechanic trades, and whatever concerns either virtue or learning, practical or theoretic, had been cherished for fixing their abode in it [i.e. Cromarty].¹⁰

If few of the later projectors of a Highland university had Urquhart's intellectual ambition there were further plans prior to the twentieth century. In 1727 the SSPCK established a school in Inverness funded by a legacy from an exiled Scottish merchant in Norwich. Raining's School was designed to take poor but able Gaelic-speaking boys from the Highlands and train them as teachers who could then be sent back out into the network of SSPCK schools in the Highlands and further the aims of that society: namely, the supplanting of Gaelic by English and the rooting out of dangerous Episcopalian and Roman Catholic religious affiliations. This was the result of a successful campaign by leading figures in Inverness Town Council and in the Presbytery of the Church of Scotland. In pressing the case for Inverness to be the site of the new school the Rev. Robert Baillie argued to the directors of the SSPCK that there was an abundance of cheap lodgings in the town and a plentiful supply of able boys in its hinterland. He believed, nevertheless, that monoglot Gaels were inevitably rooted in poverty and that the School could only have a positive effect in using bilingualism as a route to the dominance of English. The academic distinction of this school was enhanced in the late nineteenth century by the presence of the pioneering Celtic scholar, Alexander MacBain, as headmaster in the 1890s.¹¹ In the late eighteenth century we might also note the establishment of Inverness Royal Academy in 1792/3 and Tain Royal Academy in 1809. In this period secondary education, as we would understand it today, was not well developed in Scotland. In some senses the Universities of this period can be seen as surrogate secondary schools, with boys often matriculating around the age of thirteen or fourteen. In the context it is possible to see the academies as operating in the same educational field as the Scottish universities in this period, so the establishments in Inverness and Tain, both burghs with long histories as educational centres, are relevant here. Thus universities and the academies had a mutually influential relationship. The academies expanded their curriculum, especially in the area of science teaching, and

although they have been criticised for catering to the wealthy they did provide for the able poor through bursaries.¹²

In the later nineteenth century the context for further suggestions for a Highland institution of higher education came in the aftermath of the Disruption of the Church of Scotland in 1843. The importance of the support of lay people for the new Free Church of Scotland was vital to its identity but also presented challenges, not least the supply of clergy capable of preaching in Gaelic and acting as pastors to a Gaelic-speaking population. The Free Church also sought to create a network of schools and required Gaelic-speaking teachers. The Free Synod of Argyll presented proposals for a training college in Oban, an idea that was well-received in the Highlands and in the highest reaches of the church. Nothing came of it, however; perhaps because of competing demands on the resources of the church in such projects as paying its clergy; building churches, manse and schools; and providing Highland famine relief.¹³ Another antecedent of Highland higher education was the network of institutions providing 'technical' education in the Highlands. This was linked to agencies of economic development in the shape of the Forfeited Estates Commission in the second half of the eighteenth century and the Congested Districts Board in the early twentieth century. The Board, established in 1897 to promote land purchase and economic development, tried to devote part of its limited budget to vocational education. Over the course of the twentieth century the link between technical education and further education in the network of colleges in the Highlands provided a bridge to higher education in the lowlands. As the idea of a Highland university began to come to fruition in the 1990s it was based on this network of further education colleges.¹⁴

In the twentieth century there were several bursts of activity. In the late 1920s, in a curious and obscure episode, an organisation called the American Iona Society, connected to the New York Chamber of Commerce, began a campaign to raise £2m to endow

a 'Gaelic University' in the Highlands. Angus Robertson of An Comunn Gàidhealach visited New York in 1924 and 1927 and made contact with New York businessmen who were interested in forging Scottish-American connections. On one occasion he even met President Coolidge who referred to his Scottish background and declared his support for the project as a means of 'perpetuating Gaelic culture'. The plan was for an institution of twenty-two departments with a mixture of Celtic history, literature and language alongside vocational subjects designed to inculcate the skills necessary for the development of industries like agriculture, fishing and tourism. There was an ambition to purchase a 10000-acre estate in the west Highlands where practical instruction and experiments could be undertaken.¹⁵ The fact that this idea did not come to fruition does not mean that it is not interesting and significant for the way in which it revealed the prevailing attitudes towards the prospect of a new university in the Highlands. The reaction to the proposal was mixed. Scepticism was expressed by lowland newspaper editorials worried about the effect of this new institution on the existing Scottish universities and casting doubt on the idea that many Highland students would wish to stay in their home region to study. The *Scotsman* was concerned that a 'Gaelic university' would lead to the creation of a 'cult' around Gaelic that would be as harmful as the 'cult of Irish in the Irish Free State' and concluded that it might lead its students away from the main paths of modern life and leave them wandering in the culs-de-sac of the past'. The editorial concluded that the best way forward would be to strengthen the existing departments of Celtic in the ancient Scottish universities.¹⁶ In this context it was notable that another sceptic was Professor W.J. Watson, holder of the Chair of Celtic at the University of Edinburgh. He felt that a new university along the lines suggested by the Americans would be a 'fifth wheel on the coach'. Other sceptics, including Fred T. MacLeod, noted the damage caused by the promise and ultimate failure of the economic development schemes of Lord Leverhulme

in Lewis and Harris. The overriding element in the negative reaction was that it was difficult for many in the Highlands in the 1920s to overcome the prevailing assumption that, in the words of MacLeod, 'the ambition of every student, boy or girl, was to leave the Highlands and Islands as early an age as possible to take part in the academic and business life of our cities and large towns'.¹⁷ The context here was the long history of emigration from the Highlands, not least the vast movement of people in the 1920s, and the equally long history of education being perceived as a means to escape from Highland poverty. This debate has been present in all the discussions about Highland higher education dealt with in this paper.

In the years immediately following the Second World War there was a feeling that the existing universities were overcrowded in the aftermath of the war and that this was not merely a temporary phenomenon arising from the release of pent-up demand. The economic case for more graduates to take professional and scientific positions had been put during the War.¹⁸ As well as locations for new universities, such as Inverness and Dumfries, which could offer 'the ideal setting for tranquil academic life' there were proposals to give Dundee its independence from St Andrews.¹⁹ This was the atmosphere in which Inverness County Council canvassed opinion and lobbied the Scottish Office on the idea of a University. The Inverness case was articulated to the government by James Cameron, the Town Clerk and was supported by the local Ratepayers' Association as well as other towns in the Highlands such as Stornoway, Fortrose and Tain as well as Ross and Cromarty County Council. Cameron argued 'from the point of view of economy, more students from the Highlands would take advantage of a university education if facilities were provided in closer proximity to their homes ...'.

There were, however, counter proposals, although they were rather vague, from Elgin and Oban.²⁰ A delegation of Provosts and other local officials from towns interested in the idea of a fifth

university (Inverness, Stirling, Dumfries, Perth) met the Scottish Secretary, Joseph Westwood, in May 1947. He was briefed by his civil servants to remind the delegation that there was an argument that Scotland was over-provided with university places compared to the rest of the UK and that difficulties in securing supplies of building materials meant that the prospect of a new establishment was unlikely. He reminded them of the existence of the UGC and that he had very little responsibility for Scottish higher education before concluding that he 'was not prepared to discuss the rival claims of the various localities'.²¹ This was reported in the local press.²² This is an important point in the background to this paper. The Scottish Universities stood somewhat apart from the rest of the Scottish education system in that, unlike the teacher-training colleges and the Central Institutions, they were not funded or administered by the Scottish Education Department. Despite their curricular and historical distinctiveness they were part of the wider UK network of Universities and, since the advent of significant state-funding of higher education after the Great War, they received their recurrent grants from the Treasury which was advised on the details of grant to the individual autonomous universities by an organisation called the University Grants Committee. The UGC effectively resided in the Treasury from its foundation in 1919 until the establishment of the Department of Education and Science in 1964. The UGC was designed to take decisions about university funding at arms-length from the government, which provided the money, so that the basic principle of academic and institutional autonomy could be preserved.²³ This was an administrative point with important cultural implications. Some have argued that by this process the universities became distanced and eventually divorced from the mainstream of Scottish culture and politics with deleterious consequences all round.²⁴ This point is also relevant here as Highland campaigners were less well connected to central government departments in Whitehall than they were to the Scottish Office in Edinburgh. The fact that the campaign for a

Highland university was successful only after the arrangements for funding the Scottish universities were repatriated to Edinburgh in the early 1990s may be a coincidence but it is one that is worthy of reflection. This will be a theme in the final section of this paper.

The consideration of post-war need for scientific manpower had been undertaken by the Barlow Committee, which had reported in May 1946; it had recommended that the student population should be expanded and that the Scottish system could take more students.²⁵ This stimulated a debate about university expansion and the merits of new foundations versus increasing the student population in existing institutions. Glasgow and Edinburgh had around 5000 students each at the time and the extent to which they could expand further was questioned, leading some to conclude that a new institution was required. This led, further, to the problem being thought about in regional terms. One Glasgow MP referred specifically to Inverness in this context, arguing for a new kind of University to be sited there:

The region without a university will be that of Inverness. Apart from the delicacy of its atmosphere, Inverness will fit in well with the regionalisation plan. In addition it is the gateway to a hinterland of 300,000 people ... There we might create the nucleus of what could grow to be a completely residential university, something new in Scotland.²⁶

This raises an interesting point about the nature of the Scottish universities and indicates a potential difficulty in establishing a new university from scratch. The Scottish Universities had developed along very different lines from Oxford and Cambridge, which had retained their collegiate structures and communal lifestyles. Although the Scottish universities had begun as 'small and enclosed institutions' this gave way in the eighteenth century as numbers expanded. By the nineteenth century no provision was made for accommodation for students and the university did not

supervise their personal lives. More 'open' institutions developed.²⁷ By the nineteenth century a wider range of English models had emerged, notably in London and in the major industrial towns of the midlands and the north of England where new universities developed along lines that were, at least partly, influenced by Scottish models. They drew most of their students from their immediate locality and they provided few if any residential facilities.²⁸ Nevertheless, if the Scottish 'open' tradition was to be observed, either, the number of locations suitable for a new university was quite limited, or, as the MP suggested, a new type of residential institution would have to be contemplated. Most of the post-war English foundations were residential, often sited on the edge of towns, like Lancaster, and when Stirling was founded it was also a campus-based university with teaching and living accommodation on one site, the first Scottish university to be so organised. Thus, expansion was a theme which worked against the recent history of the Scottish university system and had the potential to reduce its distinctiveness.

The Scottish system in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War was small and based on the four 'ancient' universities: St Andrews, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Edinburgh. In 1950 there were 14,000 undergraduate students at these institutions. There were, perhaps, a further 7000 students at teacher-training colleges and the Central Institutions, such as the Royal College of Science and Technology in Glasgow or Heriot-Watt College in Edinburgh. Around 85 per cent of these students were from Scotland. This small system, its critics complained, was not sufficient to cope with the demand from school-leavers who had the qualifications necessary for university entrance. This argument became more insistent over the course of the 1950s and contributed to the context in which the basis for the expansion of the 1960s was laid with the appointment of the Robbins Committee in 1961.²⁹

In this post-war, but pre-Robbins, period an attempt was made to produce some tangible proposals for a Highland institution

but there was far from a unanimous feeling on the topic, even among representatives of Highland local authorities. At a meeting of 10 Jul. 1947, dominated by representatives of the burghs, the discussion was generally in favour of the idea of a university in Inverness.³⁰ In the aftermath of the meeting, however, differences of opinion emerged. The influential Director of Education for Inverness County, Dr MacLean, dissented from this point of view and declined to have anything more to do with the campaign. He informed his counterpart in Ross and Cromarty that he did not think the establishment of a University in Inverness was in the best interests of Highland education.³¹ He felt that there was not enough demand to establish a University that would attract the highest quality of staff. He rounded off his contribution by arguing that there was a case for a college to provide courses in agriculture, forestry and fishing 'a place where they could train people who intended to spend their lives in the Highlands'. Dr Alexander MacKinnon, the scholarly Church of Scotland minister at Kilmonivaig, also voiced arguments against the idea. He suggested that the Highlands did not have the necessary basis in population for the establishment of a university. Neither man seemed to think that students would come from furth of the Highlands to study there and that, in MacLean's words, 'We must ask ourselves if we will be doing the best for our young people by having all their education completed within the Highland border'. MacKinnon considered the possibility of a specialist Celtic studies centre and, despite his own work in this field, did not articulate a very positive vision:

...it was a subject which appealed to very few, it was largely a world of the dead, and while philologically it would always have the importance he did not think it would appeal to a sufficient number to justify the erection of a great institution merely on the strength of it.³²

This negative view may have been influenced by the memory of the American Iona Society scheme of the late 1920s but it was something of a straw man in the context of the late 1940s. Nevertheless, despite the disappointment of the earlier American scheme, one Inverness Councillor advocated a revived international appeal for funds at this point. There was not much evidence for his confidence that 'Highlanders all over the world will give us their wholehearted support'.³³ Editorials in the main Inverness newspaper were also unsupportive, with one asserting that 'it would be most regrettable if Highland students were ever discouraged from going to any of the great Universities outside the Highlands and were confined to the narrow limits of the Highlands for the education they seek'.³⁴ This would be the tone of the *Courier* on this question for the next twenty years. The negativity of this period can be contextualised in terms of the demographic history of the Highlands since the middle of the nineteenth century being dominated by outmigration. The interwar period had seen massive emigration in the early to mid-1920s, followed by a period of economic stagnation in the 1930s. The Second World War had seen much of the area closed off and many key industries in sharp decline. With this background, the essentially pessimistic views of leading officials, such as Dr MacLean, are explicable. The weight of history was augmented by an awareness of the direction of public policy over the period since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Over that period most government interventions in the Highlands had implicitly or explicitly encouraged people to leave the region, either by emigration to overseas locations or by migration to other parts of Scotland. The Crofters Act of 1886 might have had the opposite objective but it only applied to a particular group within Highland society and it was followed by the Crofter Colonisation schemes of the late 1880s. In the 1920s the Empire Settlement Act provided support for people who wished to emigrate to the Dominions. Voices which countered this orthodoxy, whether the broad crofters' movement in the

1880s or, more recently, the Highland Development League of Dr Lachlan Grant and the Rev. Thomas Murchison in the 1930s, no matter how popular locally, were seen as dissentient.³⁵ This was the context in which the suggestion of establishing a University in the Highlands was made and received.

The 1960s post-war period saw very significant University expansion in the United Kingdom. The first move was evident with the establishment of the University College of North Staffordshire, later the University of Keele. The moving spirit was A.D. Lindsay, the Scots-born philosopher, Master of Balliol College, Oxford, and a Glasgow graduate. Unlike other English universities Keele tried to develop a four-year degree with an interdisciplinary 'foundation year', a model with a clear Scottish root. The late 1950s had seen decisions taken to establish new universities at Brighton, (University of Sussex), Colchester (University of Essex), Coventry (University of Warwick), York, Norwich (University of East Anglia), Canterbury (University of Kent) and Lancaster, and these institutions opened in the early part of the next decade.³⁶ It was, however, recognised that this expansion was insufficient to meet the needs of the new generation for reasons of both demography (those born in the surge in fertility just after the Second World War were now reaching maturity) and economic modernisation. In February 1961 the government appointed a committee, chaired by the distinguished economist from the LSE Lionel Robbins, to investigate the entire system of higher education in the United Kingdom. Robbins noted that reform of higher education was urgently required due to increasing demand for its benefits and because without such change 'there is little hope of this densely populated island maintaining an adequate position in the fiercely competitive world of the future'.³⁷ Nevertheless, Robbins did not base his argument for expansion on the requirements of the economy but on the theme of the social importance of individual intellectual fulfilment. Even if the arguments about national competitiveness were set aside, he argued, 'it would still be true

that to realise the aspirations of a modern community as regards both wealth and culture a fully educated population is necessary'. Indeed, he went further:

... education ministers intimately to ultimate ends, in developing man's capacity to understand, to contemplate and to create. And it is a characteristic of the aspirations of this age to feel that, where there is capacity to pursue such activities, there that capacity should be fostered. The good society desires equality of opportunity for its citizens to become not merely good producers but also good men and women.³⁸

There are two important issues that arise from this point. The first is that there were those who resisted, and resented, the notion of University expansion, even before Robbins. They used the argument that expansion would mean an inevitable diminution in quality. These ranged from the novelist Kingsley Amis, who had coined the phrase 'more will mean worse', and the leader-writer of *The Times* in the wake of the publication of the Robbins Report. This will help to contextualise some of the arguments used against a University in the Highlands, not least in the columns of the *Inverness Courier*.³⁹ The second point is that the wide and humane arguments used by Robbins to support his recommendation of university expansion contrast with the Highland campaigners' emphasis on the putative university's contribution to the economic development of the region.

The expansion of secondary education, both north and south of the border, meant that there was a much bigger pool of people who were qualified for university study and the system had to be expanded to meet their needs. Robbins reported in October 1963 and recommended that the system should be massively expanded to include all those who were capable of benefiting from what it had to offer. Robbins placed a figure of over 558,000 on the projected student population in 1980/81, compared to a total of

216,000 in 1962/63.⁴⁰ To achieve this Robbins recommended both the expansion of existing institutions and the creation of entirely new ones.⁴¹ This was a sensible and unavoidable conclusion but it gave the older institutions an opportunity to argue that they could absorb the bulk of the projected expansion. This was particularly significant in Scotland where there were four 'ancient' institutions; certainly a diverse group, but one which formed a tight network and sought to defend their position against the idea of new foundations. This injected an edge into the debate which followed from Robbins' recommendation that there was an 'incontrovertible case' for at least one, and possibly two, new Universities in Scotland as there was likely to be a gap of between 10,000 and 15,000 between the supply of and demand for places by 1980/81.⁴²

The Robbins Report gave the existing universities part of the task of providing for the envisaged expansion but they had a tendency to go beyond this and argue that they had the capacity to provide all the places necessary and to deprecate the idea of a new University. Indeed, as early as 1960 in response to the vociferous campaign on behalf of Falkirk as a potential site for a university, the Principals of the four Scottish universities informed Sir Keith Murray that they found themselves in unusual unanimous agreement that they did not 'believe that there is any case for setting up a fifth university in Scotland.'⁴³ At this stage the UGC were confident that the existing institutions could cope with demand. It was felt that the demographic factor was not so potent in Scotland and there were already a relatively high level of University places per head of population in Scotland (Scotland had around 17% of the total university population in Great Britain).⁴⁴ The UGC did recognise, however, and this was echoed in some press comment, that Glasgow and Edinburgh Universities were already big enough and that if they were to expand further the student experience would not be a positive one.⁴⁵

The idea of establishing a University in Inverness had a long pedigree, as we have seen, but was most widely canvassed, especially by Inverness Burgh Council, in the early 1960s. In 1953 the idea of a University had been referred to as 'a possible asset to the Highlands and would be a distinct possibility if Inverness Burgh continues to increase its population over the next twenty years at the same rate as in the past'.⁴⁶ It is symptomatic of the way in which many of the ideas of this period did not come to fruition that the notion did not re-emerge until the following decade.

Inverness's campaign to have a University established predated the publication of the Robbins Report. A paper which was sent to the UGC as early as 1960 drew heavily on the argument that the establishment of a University in Inverness would help the Highlands to contribute to the life of the nation. It was also suggested that the University would help to build on existing initiatives which had sought to develop the Highland economy:

the Dounreay Atomic Power Station, which has, since its inception ... more than doubled the population of Thurso... We have good reason to believe that this Atomic Station will become the centre of new ventures, within the same area, in the application of science to industrial needs and that in our Northern region scientific teaching and research will become of rapidly increasing importance.⁴⁷

Other arguments, such as the possibility of developing medical education at Raigmore hospital, were also stressed, but the greatest emphasis was placed on ideas concerning Celtic Studies and on the contribution of the University to the development of the Highlands. In the former area the memorandum suggested:

Our Gaelic culture is national heritage, even if in the past it has taken foreign scholarship to bring the fact home to us. We think it is time that this whole realm of study was integrated in a

native centre that would be recognised everywhere as thorough and authoritative, and that would attract students from foreign countries. Here special or post-graduate courses might well be instituted, and teaching be combined with research and field work. At the same time, we consider that scholarship might well find its creative outlet in stimulating the arts, especially literature and music where the Gaelic heritage is rich.⁴⁸

The memo also sought to tap into what was identified as growing interest in the development of the Highlands, although this was not so strong as it would become in the period after 1965 when there was the work of the North of Scotland Hydro Electric Board and the Forestry Commission to point to. The memorandum concluded:

what we wish to stress is the certainty, in our view, that in inviting a University to Inverness we are inviting it to a region that has a long period of development in front of it, and an ever-growing community that would be greatly stimulated by its presence. For in the Gaelic tradition lies a very high respect for learning and scholarship; and perhaps it may not be unreasonable to conclude that the University, amid the unusual circumstances and problems of the area, would in course of time assume a distinctive and progressive character that would give it a unique place among the other centres of teaching and research.⁴⁹

A conference of local authority representatives had been held in Inverness in 1961 and subsequent contact was made with the UGC, but this activity was overtaken by the appointment of the Robbins Committee.⁵⁰ It was the report's recommendation that one of the new Universities envisaged should be sited in Scotland which really gave it impetus. The other bidders were Falkirk, Stirling (the ultimate winner), Ayr, Perth, East Kilbride and Dumfries. It was the job of the University Grants Committee to make a decision

and a special sub-committee chaired by Sir John Wolfenden was appointed to carry out the investigations, including visits (referred to in prospect by Wolfenden as 'rather arduous') to the sites in the Spring of 1964, necessary for an informed decision to be made.⁵¹ In retrospect Wolfenden described the experience as being:

subjected to an intelligent and high-pressure sales campaign by half a dozen places from Ayr to Inverness, including, from one enterprising Provost, a trip in a helicopter to enable us to see at a glance the advantages of the proposed site.⁵²

Inverness had no helicopter.

It should also be noted at this stage that the Universities were not a Scottish Office responsibility. Although they were autonomous institutions their funding was allocated by the University Grants Committee, a British-wide body, part of the Treasury from its establishment in 1919 until 1964 when it became associated with the new Department of Education and Science in London. Indeed, the relationship between the Universities and the Scottish Office could be fraught. The Scottish Office was involved in the preparation of submissions to the UGC and was firmly of the view that the merits of the bids could be judged on their potential regional-development effect. It was noted that:

. . . the final choice might lie with a site in which there seemed to be a better prospect of the majority of the graduates of the University building up sympathies, interests, and contacts in their undergraduate career which would encourage them, providing the opportunities can be created, to continue, or to return, to live and work in Scotland. The drain of trained manpower from Scotland at all levels, including in particular University graduates, is such that for many years to come this must be a significant consideration.

It divided the competitors into two categories, those such as Falkirk, Stirling and Ayr, which 'can be viewed . . . from the standpoint of the transformation and regional modernisation of central Scotland' or Inverness and Dumfries which could be seen 'as a new prime mover in the stimulation of under developed sub regions such as the Highlands and the Borders'.⁵³ This emphasis on regional development may have been a wrong turning, however; after meeting the UGC in Inverness in May 1964 the Highland Panel⁵⁴ concluded 'that what the UGC was primarily interested in was not the advantage that a University could bring to the Highlands, but the suitability or otherwise of Inverness as a site'.⁵⁵ In the course of the UGC Sub-Committee's visit to Inverness in May 1964, Sir John Wolfenden laid out the basic criteria upon which the location of the new University would be chosen: the appropriateness of the site to University development; the connection between the site and the economic and social background; the availability of site and buildings; the degree of support, financial and moral from the locality; the attractiveness of the place as a centre of learning and study; proximity to libraries and research facilities. Wolfenden concluded:

our first concern must be of the suitability of the place from the academic point of view ... not opposed to, but distinguished from, the social, economic and even meteorological attractions of a place. The first concern must be the academic appropriateness'.⁵⁶

There are a number of interesting features of the Inverness bid and some telling differences of opinion within the Highland Panel over attitudes to the establishment of a University. The principal appeal made to the UGC was on economic grounds:

There is an economic argument in favour of the establishment of a university in the Highlands which is, that if the Government

is serious in wishing to further the economic and industrial development of the North, which has a population of a quarter of a million, there is no better way of achieving this aim than to establish – as a first step – a university in Inverness. Such a development would help to create not only a much-needed feeling of confidence and independence, but it would bring in its wake industrial expansion.

It was proposed that the University be built on 200 acres of farmland on the edge of the town adjacent to Raigmore Hospital; the Cameron Barracks, a short distance away – 'now surplus to requirements' – could be adapted to accommodate 500 students and staff. In academic terms it was noted that Inverness was

. . . an ideal centre for pursuit of the natural sciences because of its situation in an area, unique in Britain, for its opportunities in providing the best field of study of biology, zoology, botany, geography, geology and forestry. It is also a suitable centre for the study of Celtic language and literature.⁵⁷

On the Highland panel, however, there were some discordant voices: one such was perhaps fairly predictable, the other, perhaps somewhat surprising. The first voice was that of Professor A. C. O'Dell, of the Department of Geography, University of Aberdeen;⁵⁸ he remarked at a meeting of the Highland panel in May 1964:

. . . there was no evidence of need for places from the Highland area as the experience of Aberdeen shows. The capital costs of keeping a University were fantastic and the Robbins Report stated emphatically that an isolated area was not suitable for the location of a University. In addition great care should be taken in the promotion of the suggested subjects for study particularly suitable for an Inverness location. In his opinion all could be found satisfactorily elsewhere. The sponsors of

Inverness should demonstrate that it could attract and retain good staff and students and the advantages of the air service should be stressed.⁵⁹

A factor in O'Dell's thinking may well have been the extent to which a new University in Inverness would compromise the ambitious plans for expansion which were being developed in his own institution. In the 1960s Aberdeen was in confident mood and seemed to be something of a teacher's pet of the UGC.⁶⁰

A second sceptic, and perhaps a more surprising one given her interest in education on Argyll County Council, was Naomi Mitchison.⁶¹ She was particularly sceptical of the likely impact on the UGC of regional development type arguments and was more in favour of a localised and more accessible form of higher education:

Academic interest and not the possible benefit to an area should be the criteria in selecting University sites . . . the panel should consider the possibilities of establishing in the Highland area county colleges which would provide a higher education, of particular benefit to young people whose educational qualifications were below university standard, and would be far less costly to equip than a university.⁶²

Indeed, some thought was given to a variant of this idea in October 1964 when the Western Isles Crofters' Union put forward proposals for a 'College of Crofting and Resource Management Studies' which would be closely tied to the school system and would enable crofters, fishermen and their families 'to make the best use of the admittedly limited resources of the region'.⁶³

Not so much a sceptic as an outright opponent was the octogenarian editor of the *Inverness Courier*, Evan MacLeod Barron.⁶⁴ Throughout 1963 and 1964, in a series of ever more strident editorials, he argued that a University in Inverness would be a byword for parochialism; would not be able to compete in

terms of quality with the existing institutions, especially in terms of library facilities; would have no discernible development impact; and would be too expensive to build, using resources which could be better used to develop the transport infrastructure. He did argue that a postgraduate institution of Celtic studies, or an advanced medical school would be a more positive possibility. Potential students of such an institution would have had the benefit of attendance at one of the traditional Universities. As far as undergraduate studies were concerned, Barron thought that the existing Universities could cope with the required expansion in student numbers: a view which was shared, predictably enough, by Principals Wright and Knox of Aberdeen and St Andrews, as will be noted below. Barron's views can be discerned from one of his editorials in the *Courier* from May 1964: writing of 'Highland Students' needs' he argued:

To doom them to receiving their Higher Education in their native Highlands, at a University in Inverness, would be to ensure a breed of narrow-minded, parochial graduates who would be of little good to the Highlands; to their fellow Highlanders, especially to any of the younger generation whom they came to instruct; to themselves; or to the University. ... The Highland capital is the last, not the first, place in which to establish another University.⁶⁵

Barron was not content with producing editorial columns for his readers but even went to the lengths of sending copies of these to the UGC; perhaps noting that among John Wolfenden's criteria for University location was 'moral support' from the locality. Barron made explicit that his objective in doing this was to counter 'the impression that everyone in Inverness and the Highlands is in favour of a University in Inverness'.⁶⁶

Without going to the rhetorical lengths of Barron's *Inverness Courier*, the other Inverness newspapers were less than enthusiastic

about the prospect of a University in the Highland capital. The *Northern Chronicle* argued that a technical institution placed to serve the industrial central belt of Scotland was more appropriate to the requirements of the day and was content to damn the notion with faint praise:

And in the realm of scholarly achievement it might be a half a century before an Inverness University would come to be valued at all ... In the view of numerous scholars, the fact is that a nation can have too many Universities and too many undergraduates. By doing so, they contend, the general level of university education – and the value of University degrees – falls and falls.⁶⁷

The *Highland News*, edited from 1959 to 1963 by the erudite and historically minded R.W. (Billy) Munro, was more positive. He repeatedly urged Highland local authorities and businesses to be more assertive, especially in the face of an aggressive campaign by the East Stirlingshire lobby in favour of their site at Falkirk. He regretted the absence of ‘wholehearted and concerted support’ from the locality and, in May 1963, he concluded that the Highlands seemed to be paying only ‘lip service’ to the idea of a university and that the ‘folk who could and should be helping need a kick in the pants’. The paper continued in this vein after Munro ceased to be editor and in 1963 it was a critic of the seemingly passive nature of the Inverness campaign.⁶⁸

An effort to counter this kind of thinking was made by Robin Adam, a medieval historian from the University of St Andrews. Adam’s voice is an interesting one as he was based in one of the ancient universities but he was a native of Easter Ross. Adam’s plan emphasised traditional elements but also presented some ideas for variations on the traditional Scottish three and four year curricula; for the purposes of this paper, however, his ideas on the relationship between the university and the locality are the most relevant. He

argued that ‘a new university is most secure when its intellectual life draws inspiration from the society and land in which it grows up.’ He went on to present a list of disciplinary areas in the natural and social sciences where he felt ‘there were peculiar advantages in the Highlands’ and which would provide ‘the raw material for the creation of a new university of a distinctive type’. Adam countered the kind of argument being put forward by people like Barron when he argued that to become a ‘challenge to inward-lookingness’ and ‘an intellectual and educational growth point’ it would need to draw its staff and students from diverse geographical and social backgrounds.⁶⁹ This was a useful argument to emphasise but to a certain extent it was making a virtue out of a necessity as the population of the Highlands was not of an extent to produce a sufficient number of potential students in a period when the vast majority of undergraduates came straight from school.

The next issue to consider is the response of the UGC Sub-Committee to the attractions of Inverness when it visited in 1964. During their visit the Sub-Committee were less than enamoured by the fact that they were treated to a series of about a dozen speeches ‘extolling the virtues of Inverness as a site for the new University in Scotland’ and left with little time to view the actual site. They were left with an impression that the main thrust of the Inverness claim rested on the distinctiveness of Highland life; the unique facilities for the study of life sciences; and the Highland development argument. The final submission from the Inverness promotion committee prior to the visit had stressed these two points and had sought to link the issues of education, industry and Highland confidence:

[The establishment of a University] would help to create not only a much needed feeling of confidence and independence but it would bring in its wake industrial expansion. This twofold requirement relating to learning and industry is essential if the Highlands is to become a prosperous and progressive area,

and it is appropriate at this time, when Government policy is concerned with establishing of Universities and the distribution of industry throughout the country, that due attention should be given to what is considered a strong claim for the establishment of a University in Inverness.⁷⁰

The visit to the site was also less than auspicious in that the Brigadier at the Cameron Barracks – ‘a massive quadrangle of solid Scottish buildings of a type very useful to a new University’ – denied that they would be available for use, but that an adjacent site with some hutted buildings might be.⁷¹ It is unlikely, however, that these local difficulties had much impact on the eventual decision in favour of Stirling. The main factor which seemed to count against Inverness was that of its geographical position.⁷² One member of the Sub-Committee, Dame Lucy Sutherland, was quite explicit about this, telling Wolfenden: ‘I think we should rule out both Dumfries and Inverness as too inaccessible...’ and she went on to assert that ‘Inverness is so remote that it could not fail to be under some handicap, and there would be altogether too much Highland regionalism about it’.⁷³ Of all the claimants Inverness had the smallest population within a thirty mile radius: 105,000 compared to 2.8m for Stirling, the latter figure higher than any of the existing Universities.⁷⁴ Indeed, a hint of this outcome can be seen in the recommendations of the Robbins Report, the document which brought the Inverness initiative to life. There is a theme running through the report which indicates the favouring of urban locations for Universities. This is made explicit on occasion and relates to assumptions about the place of a University in society. The report notes:

In particular we wish to urge the claim of the large cities and centres of population for further facilities for higher education. We do so first for the benefit of the institutions themselves. It is most valuable for the teachers and students in academic

institutions to have convenient access to national institutions such as libraries, museums, galleries and other cultural centres and to learned societies. It is also important for them to have easy access to centres of industry, commerce, medicine and law, to institutions of central and local government, and to research institutions. Two-way traffic between such centres and universities is of great benefit particularly in the natural sciences, technology, medicine and the social sciences. Such intercourse is most readily established in the large centres of population and particularly in great cities.⁷⁵

This theme had been fully rehearsed in some press comment prior to the deliberations of Wolfenden and his colleagues.⁷⁶

Clearly Stirling was not a great city, in the sense suggested in the quotation, but it did have a large catchment area, as we have seen. Many of the phrases in the Inverness submission attempted to respond to this agenda but they were insufficiently powerful to outweigh the perceived disadvantages of geography. This aspect of the Robbins Report was certainly in the mind of Wolfenden’s Committee as it is specifically referred to in the records detailing the final decision making process. As well as assessing whether the chosen location and local support were such as to give confidence in the ‘creation and growth of an academic institution of university standard’ the committee also referred to the importance of attracting staff of the ‘necessary quality and energy’, the traditions of Scottish University education were also referred to when it was asked:

Whether the location was such as to enable to the Scottish tradition of day students to be continued while at the same time providing substantial numbers of student lodgings to supplement any residential accommodation which might be provided either by the university or from other public funds?⁷⁷

There is also an assumption that these new institutions would be bigger than the Inverness promoters had in mind. The cost of establishing a large number of small institutions, with inevitable duplication of facilities such as libraries, was made explicit by Robbins.⁷⁸

The Inverness committee seemed to be genuinely shocked by the decision. This view was felt in wider circles in Inverness, as related by the *Highland News*, which thought the decision 'arbitrary' and 'tragic'.⁷⁹ The *Courier*, unsurprisingly, took a different view, arguing that the Inverness Committee had been mistaken all along in its emphasis on an economic rather than an academic case and that they had got their just desserts.⁸⁰ Wotherspoon related it to the general problem in trying to convince any remote government body of Highland claims:

As we have learned from long experience, the problems confronting the Highlands and Islands cannot be adequately understood by an official body from the South during a brief visit as it is difficult for its members to appreciate what is taking place in this comparatively vast region beyond the Grampians and assess its true potential whether in economics or learning.⁸¹

Nevertheless, as we have seen, Stirling was chosen as the site for the new Scottish University and a campus University was constructed at Bridge of Allan.⁸² In his memoirs Wolfenden mused that he had been in favour of a new university associated with one of the New Towns, perhaps Cumbernauld, but he recognised that this would be 'an artificial adjunct rather than an integral element in a new community'. Had the university been part of the original New Town plans it would have been, in his view, preferable. He concluded:

We finally plumped for Stirling. It had a history, it was near to Scotland's concentration of population, it had a good many big

houses which could be used for student residence, and it had a beautiful site with lake and rolling parkland which reminded me of Reading. In retrospect, I think we were right.⁸³

A further factor may have been that this site was better placed to take some of the pressure of student numbers off Glasgow and Edinburgh, which the UGC thought were becoming too big. Aberdeen was also a beneficiary of this process in the 1960s. Additional developments at this time, separate from the processes discussed above included the creation of the University of Strathclyde from the former Royal College of Science and Technology and the Scottish College of Commerce, the foundation of Heriot-Watt University from similar roots and the award of independence to the Queens College of the University of St Andrews as the new University of Dundee.⁸⁴ When these developments are laid out it does seem that Inverness missed the boat: this was a considerable missed opportunity, the climate in the Higher Education system was more favourable, and the attitude of the state towards it more positive, in the 1960s than at any other moment in the twentieth century.

The period immediately prior to the election of the Labour government in the Autumn of 1964 and the creation of the Highlands and Islands Development Board the following year was one of quite profound pessimism in the Highlands about prospects for regional development.⁸⁵ Those behind the proposal to establish a University in Inverness referred to the 'tragic' and 'quite stunning' effect of the decision to reject the claims of the Highland capital.⁸⁶ Coming in the wake of the Beeching Report which recommended savage cuts in the railways in the North of Scotland and the winding down of the activities of the much vaunted Hydro Board, the culture of pessimism is understandable and it provided an entry point for the Labour Party's vigorous campaigns in the Highlands and on Highland issues in the general elections of 1964 and 1966.

There was a coda to the events of the 1960s. In the 1970s there was an attempt to re-invigorate the campaign and renewed efforts to lobby the UGC. The continued expansion towards a target of around 500,000 students gave the Inverness campaigners hope that they could still achieve their aim. A firm of external consultants (PA Management Consultants) with experience in this field was engaged and a new committee, composed of members from the local authorities and the HIDB, was established.⁸⁷ More thought was given on this occasion to providing details about the kind of University that was envisaged. The advice from PA Consultants was that:

In any application made to the UGC it should be made clear that (a) the proposed university should be in the Highlands and not for the Highlands and (b) that care should be taken to ensure that the course content and the teaching methods applied should have a unique aspect and in this respect it was felt that a University in the Highlands could be particularly strong in the fields of pure science (Botany/Biology, Marine Biology, Fish Farming, Distilling, Physics and Geology) and social sciences (Planning, Land Use and Rural Economics).⁸⁸

The advice to the campaign was that the Committee would have to convince the UGC of their ability to finance the construction of halls of residence and to provide ample subsidiary accommodation. This was probably a more important consideration than it had been in 1963–4 as an increasing number of students lived away from home and more sophisticated accommodation was required. PA Consultants prepared a detailed proposal document designed to be submitted to the UGC. It argued across a broad range of headings but it gave priority to the relationship between a university and the economic development of the Highlands and its contribution to an improved environment in the region before it turned to thinking about the range of subjects to be taught and studied or

the kind of university which might emerge should the UGC agree to its foundation.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, it was more evidentially-rich than anything that had been prepared in 1963–4 but it was to no avail. Although the UGC were still committed to expanding the population of university students they decided that the existing institutions had the capacity to absorb the increased numbers. The documents show that this came as a shock to the campaigners. John Hill, the secretary of the committee, reported the UGC's refusal to meet a delegation from the committee as a 'most serious and unanticipated setback'.⁹⁰ Robert Grieve, formerly of the HIDB, read into this a generally negative attitude to the Highlands from government bodies:

“The fact is that far too many influential people outside the Highlands cannot take the idea of major development (including the idea of a university) seriously ... I am myself convinced that the Highlands should not sit back now and wait ... we all know that the Highlands' case has to be fought harder than elsewhere.”⁹¹

This, however, was the end of the meaningful campaign for a university in the Highlands for over twenty years. Significant developments did occur in this period, not least the foundation of Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, the closest the Highlands had come to possessing a genuine higher-education institution in the modern sense. In the view of one supporter the importance of the new College was that it was an antidote to the fact that 'the intellectual leadership of Gaeldom has been siphoned off into southern cities and southern universities' for too long and to the detriment of the revival of the language in its 'heartland'.⁹² The reasons for the failure of campaigners in the 1970s were not associated with the strengths or weaknesses of the campaigners in Inverness but connected to wider policy changes at UK-government level. The late 1970s saw significant cutbacks in public expenditure and universities, in common with other areas hungry for funds, entered a period of retrenchment. Although this was under way prior to the general election of 1979 the advent of a Conservative

government widely seen as suspicious of the culture of academic life in the UK signalled a deeper change. The UGC was, during its years associated with the DES, the agent of expansion. Its original role as a buffer between the state and the autonomous universities was somewhat masked in the years of plenty from the early 1960s to the late 1970s. Its capacity to act as a buffer in the early 1980s was rather cruelly exposed when the Conservative government introduced substantial cuts in the recurrent grant for higher education. The decision of the UGC to implement the cuts selectively caused considerable pain in certain institutions, some in Scotland, Stirling and Aberdeen for example.⁹³ In this context, however, there was very little prospect of progress towards the idea of a Highland university.

A final question: what changed between the late 1970s and the early 1990s when the campaign revived? In this context the most significant shift was the fallout from the devolution referendum of 1979. During the late 1970s the Scottish universities were very strongly opposed to the Labour government's plans for a Scottish Assembly. They saw themselves as part of a wider British system and wanted to distance themselves from policy-making at a Scottish level.⁹⁴ The UGC, a London-based institution associated with the Treasury and the DES was central to this. The cuts of the early 1980s and the increasingly centralised control of the system during that decade led to the demise of the UGC and its replacement by the University Funding Council in 1988 and then in 1993 the advent of a separate Funding Council for the Scottish Universities, massively expanded in number by the eradication of the binary divide between Universities and Central Institutions in 1992. The alternative to creating a separate Scottish funding council would have been for the Scottish Office to lose all responsibility for Scottish higher education after the Central Institutions became universities. Despite the Unionist government in power at the time this was unpalatable.⁹⁵ The Scottish Higher Education Funding Council, later the Scottish Funding Council (after it acquired

responsibility for Further Education), was established in 1993. The experience of the cuts inclined the Scottish universities away from the strict unionism of the 1970s and the new post-1992 system meant that the Scottish Office had policy responsibility for the Scottish Universities for the first time in the era of significant state-funding of higher education.⁹⁶ This meant that the target of campaigners for a Highland university was closer to home and more comprehending of the arguments about Highland particularity. Perhaps Michael Forsyth was engaged in a last desperate attempt to outflank the prospect of Scottish devolution but the fact that he now had responsibility for Scottish higher education meant that he could take an interest – a very significant interest, as it turned out – in the idea for a University in the Highlands. Had there not been the reforms of the early 1990s the campaigners for a University of the Highlands and Islands would have been in the same position as their Invernessian predecessors of 1947 and Mr Forsyth would have been in the same position as his predecessor, Joseph Westwood, and would have not been able to take a decision in favour of a university in the Highlands, whether motivated by populism or not.

Thus, the narrative of the idea of a highland university operated in widely differing contexts. The agenda of the SSPCK in the eighteenth century included the extirpation of Gaelic. The objective of the Free Church in the nineteenth century was to evangelise and educate in an area where it had very strong support. The ambition of the British state, of which the Scottish universities were remote islands, was to expand its search for talent in a wider section of the population. There is perhaps a point of greater nuance to be considered here. That is to note that the SSPCK was interested in the idea of modernisation, including economic modernisation, and its cultural objectives were part of that wider project. The argument for University expansion in the post-1945 era was also related to economic modernisation. Thus, there are greater historical continuities over this long period than are at first

apparent. At the moment of greatest opportunity in the mid-1960s advocates of a Highland university reacted to this with arguments that concentrated on ideas of regional development. This draws the narrative into the wider discussion of the regeneration of the Highland economy, where it has resided, to the ultimate confusion of the overall success of the project now that it has reached fruition of a sort.

Endnotes

- 1 This was the title of a series of editorials about the prospect of a university in Inverness in the *Inverness Courier* in the early 1960s, see 16 Sep., 4 Nov. 1960, 14 Mar. 1961. I am grateful to Professor Lindsay Paterson and Professor James Hunter for their careful reading of this paper and for making many suggestions for its improvement.
- 2 See the contributions by Valerie MacIver, Robert Cowan and Graham Hills in *A University for the Highlands and Islands: Prospects and Possibilities* (Barail, Centre for Highlands and Islands Policy Studies, June 1992).
- 3 Graham Hills, 'The University of the Highlands and Islands: Scotland's first regional university', in Ronald Crawford (ed.), *A Future for Scottish Higher Education* (Glasgow, 1997), 86.
- 4 Brian S. Duffield and Graham Hills, *Community Development and Higher Education: A Case Study of the University of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (Inverness and Brussels, 1998), 25.
- 5 David Newlands and Margaret Parker, 'The prospects and potential of a new university in the highlands and islands', *Scottish Affairs*, no 21, Autumn 1997, 78–94 presented a more critical analysis of the UHI project than the material produced by its advocates.
- 6 Drusilla Scott, *A.D. Lindsay: A Biography* (Oxford, 1971); James Mountford, *Keele: An Historical Critique* (London, 1972).
- 7 Clive M. Birnie, 'The British Government and the Scottish Highlands, 1950–65', PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2008.
- 8 Christopher Blake and Stuart McDowall, 'A local input-output table', *Scottish Journal of Political Economy*, 14 (1967), 227–42, an article comparing the contribution of the University to the local economy of St Andrews with that of the tourist industry and concluding that the former was more significant;
- 9 M. Brownrigg, 'The economic impact of a new university', *Scottish Journal of Political Economy*, 20 (1973), 123–39, this paper is concerned with the University of Stirling; Edgar Cooke, 'Analysing university student contribution to the economic base of the community', *Annals of Regional Science*, 4 (1970), 146–53, looking at case studies in Florida; M.F. Bleaney *et al*, 'What does a university add to its local economy?', *Applied Economics*, 24 (1992), 305–11, the effect of the University of Nottingham is the topic of this paper; H.W. Armstrong, 'The local income and employment effect of Lancaster University', *Urban Studies*, 30 (1993), 1653–68, this is an interesting case in relation to the Highlands, as Lancaster was one of the new institutions in the 1960s, it was built from scratch in a region without major industrial employers and it possessed a substantial rural hinterland.
- 9 The fate of large scale projects such as those at Dounreay, Corpach, Invergordon and Aviemore are considered in Niall G. MacKenzie, "'Chucking buns across the fence": governmental planning and regeneration projects in the Scottish highland economy, 1945–82', PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2008.
- 10 *The Works of Sir Thomas Urquhart of Cromarty* (Edinburgh, 1834), 396. I am extremely grateful to Dr David Worthington of the Centre for History, UHI, for this reference.
- 11 Victor Edward Durkacz, 'The Decline of the Celtic Languages: A Study of Linguistic and Cultural Conflict in Scotland, Wales and Ireland from the Reformation to the Twentieth Century' (Edinburgh, 1983), 58–9 Donald E. Meek, "'Beachdan ùra à Inbhir Nis/ New opinions from Inverness": Alexander MacBain (1855–1907) and the foundation of Celtic Studies in Scotland', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 131 (2001), 23–39.
- 12 Donald J. Withrington, 'Education and society in the eighteenth century', in N. T. Phillipson and R. Mitchison (eds), *Scotland in the Age of Improvement* (Edinburgh, 1970), 169–99; Lindsay Paterson, 'Two centuries of Scottish secondary education', unpublished paper; Robert Preece, *A History of Inverness Royal Academy: Song School, Town School, Comprehensive* (Inverness, 2011); R.W. Munro and Jean Munro, *Tain Through the Centuries* (Edinburgh, 2005); most historical treatments of the academies have focussed on their aim of attracting the children of the expanding middle classes – one historian has described them as 'Exclusive, expensive and divisive', Hamish M. Paterson, 'Secondary Education', in Heather Holmes (ed.), *Scottish Life and Society. A Compendium of Scottish Ethnology, Volume 11, Institutions of Scotland: Education* (East Linton, 2000), 139; another historical point worth noting in the cases of Tain and Inverness is the importance of the profits from slave plantations in the Caribbean in their foundations.
- 13 Durkacz, *Decline of the Celtic Languages*, 170–1.

- 14 F.G. Thompson, 'Technical education in the highlands and islands', *TGSI*, 48 (1972–4), 244–338.
- 15 *Scotsman*, 11 Oct 1926, 9; *New York Times*, 14 Jan 1927, 12 and 27 Feb. 1927, 20.
- 16 'A Gaelic University', *Scotsman*, 13 Oct. 1926, 8 see also another *Scotsman* editorial with the same title on 24 Feb. 1927, 8.
- 17 *Scotsman*, 24 Feb 1927, 9; one of the few more positive voices to greet this proposal was Donald Shaw, the Edinburgh solicitor who had been active in the defence of land raiders from the Hebrides. He argued that the existing Celtic scholars were too much concerned with the 'peculiarities of grammar' and insufficiently aware of the extent to which the proposed university could be a 'humane soul for the Highland soul', *Scotsman*, 26 Mar. 1927, 16.
- 18 W.A.C. Stewart, *Higher Education in Postwar Britain* (London, 1989), 46–8.
- 19 *Scotsman*, 14 Nov. 1946.
- 20 Edinburgh, National Archives of Scotland (NAS), ED26/638, Secretary of the Inverness Ratepayers' Association to Joseph Westwood, 14 Mar. 1947; Town Clerk, Tain, to Westwood, 3 Jan. 1947; County Clerk, Moray, to Secretary of the SED, 9 Jan. 1947; James Cameron to Secretary of the Scottish Home Department, 28 Nov. 1946; Town Clerk Fortrose to same, 18 Dec. 1946; Town Clerk of Stornoway to Secretary of the SED; County Clerk, Ross and Cromarty, to same, 23 Dec. 1946. For the proposal from Oban see Town Clerk, Oban, to Westwood, 30 Jan. 1947 and for the Elgin proposal see Town Clerk, Elgin, to Westwood, 27 Dec. 1946; and Lord Provost, Elgin, to Westwood, 8 Nov. 1946; these were almost completely undeveloped proposals. It is interesting to note from this file that the advocates of a university at Stirling used the same arguments – the history of the town, its central situation and ease of access – that were deployed in its favour in 1963–4, see Town Clerk, Callander, to Westwood, 20 Jan. 1947.
- 21 NAS, ED26/638, Note for the Secretary of State's meeting with the Provosts interested in the Fifth University Proposal, 2 May 1947; Note of the Secretary of State's meeting with the Provosts interested in the Fifth University Proposal, 2 May 1947.
- 22 *Inverness Courier*, 9 May 1947.
- 23 M. Shattock and R. Berdahl, 'The British UGC, 1919–83: changing relationships with government and the universities', *Higher Education*, 13 (1984), 471–99; G.C. Moodie, 'Buffer coupling and brake: reflections on 60 years of the UGC', *Higher Education*, 12 (1983), 331–47; G. Neave, 'The changing boundary between the state and higher education', *European Journal of Education*, 17 (1982), 231–41; E.R. Tapper and B.G. Salter, 'The changing idea of university autonomy', *Studies in Higher Education*, 20 (1995), 59–71; for a detailed study of the relationship between one Scottish university and the UGC see I.G.C. Hutchison, *The University and the State: The Case of Aberdeen, 1860–1963* (Aberdeen, 1993), 43–137.
- 24 This is a theme in George Elder Davie, *The Crisis of the Democratic Intellect: The Problem of Generalism and Specialisation in Twentieth-Century Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1986), although he was also scathing about the 'narrow-minded dictatorship' (p. 32) of the SED.
- 25 *Scientific Man-power: Report of a Committee Appointed by the Lord President of the Council*, Cmd 6824.
- 26 *House of Commons Hansard*, 5th series, vol. 438, col. 153, 3 Jun. 1947, a speech by Mr J. Rankin, Glasgow Tradeston.
- 27 R.D. Anderson, 'Scottish Universities', in Holmes (ed.), *Education*, 154–8.
- 28 M. Sanderson, 'The English civic universities and the "industrial spirit", 1880–1914', *Historical Research*, 61 (1988), 90–114.
- 29 Lindsay Paterson, *Scottish Education in the Twentieth Century* (Edinburgh, 2003), 155.
- 30 Inverness, Highland Archive, R33, Campaign for a Fifth University in Inverness, Conference re Proposed University, 10 July 1947.
- 31 Highland Archive, R33, MacLean to Dr Thomson, Dingwall, 20 Aug. 1947
- 32 *Inverness Courier*, 6 Jun. 11 Jul. 1947.
- 33 *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, 12 May 1947.
- 34 *Inverness Courier*, 10 Jun. 1947.
- 35 See James Hunter, *The Claim of Crofting: The Scottish Highlands and Islands, 1930–1990* (Edinburgh, 1991), 23–47; Clive M. Birnie, "'New deal' or raw deal"? Public Administration and Economic Development in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, 1929–1939', MSc thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2003.
- 36 It is a common misconception that these new institutions were the result of the Robbins Report. This was not the case. Stirling was the only one of the new universities recommended by Robbins to open its doors, John Carsewell, *Government and the Universities in Britain: Programme and Performance*,

- 1960–1980 (Cambridge, 1985), 17–19; Stewart, *Higher Education in Postwar Britain*, 49–55, 95–6.
- 37 *Report of the Committee on Higher Education*, [hereafter *Higher Education*] 1963, Cmnd. 2154, 5; for a highly detailed chronological account of Robbins' involvement with this question see Susan Howson, *Lionel Robbins: A Life in Economics, Government and the Arts* (Cambridge, 2012), 858–96.
- 38 *Higher Education*, 8; Robert Anderson, *British Universities Past and Present* (London, 2006), 149.
- 39 *Encounter*, July, 1960; *The Times*, 24 Nov., 4, 5, 6 Dec. 1963.
- 40 *Higher Education*, 69; K. O. Morgan, *The People's Peace: British History since 1945* (2nd edition, Oxford, 1999), 234–5; D. King and V. Nash, 'Continuity of Ideas and the Politics of Higher Education Expansion in Britain from Robbins to Dearing', *Twentieth Century British History*, 12 (2001), 191–7.
- 41 *Higher Education*, 147–69.
- 42 *Higher Education*, 155.
- 43 London, The National Archives of the U.K.: Public Record Office [TNA: PRO], UGC7/237, T.M. Knox (Principal of the University of St Andrews) to Sir Keith Murray, 7. Dec 1960; see also UGC7/237, Extract from note of discussion between the Secretary and Principal Knox, 8 Sept. 1960; *Scotsman*, 19, 30 Dec. 1960
- 44 TNA: PRO, UGC7/238, University Expansion in Scotland, 23 Jun. 1961.
- 45 G. Turner, 'Student classes 300 strong'.
- 46 NAS, DD12/913, Royal Burgh of Inverness, Town and Country Planning Act, 1947, Development Plan, Survey Report, 3 Feb. 1952
- 47 TNA: PRO, UGC7/237, Memorandum by Provost Robert Wotherspoon, Inverness for submission to Sir Keith Murray, Chairman of the University Grants Committee in connection with the proposed erection of a fifth University in Scotland, 28 December 1960
- 48 TNA: PRO, UGC7/237, Memorandum by Provost Robert Wotherspoon
- 49 TNA: PRO, UGC7/237, Memorandum by Provost Robert Wotherspoon
- 50 NAS, SEP12/194, Copy of a letter from Robert Wotherspoon, Chairman, and Mr James Cameron, Clerk, North of Scotland Sponsoring Committee, 23 Jan. 1964
- 51 TNA: PRO, UGC7/239, Wolfenden to Professor T. E. Wright 31 Oct. 1963. Wolfenden had been an academic philosopher and a headmaster of English public schools. From 1950 to 1963 he was Vice-Chancellor of the University of Reading. He became Chairman of the UGC in 1963. See J. Weeks, 'Wolfenden, John Frederick, Baron Wolfenden (1906–1985)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/31852>, accessed 14 Jan. 2014]. He was joined on the Committee by Professor Asa Briggs, a historian of England best known for a trilogy of books on the Victorian period. At the time of the Committee's deliberations he was a member of the UGC and working at the University of Sussex, of which he later became Vice-Chancellor, see Asa Briggs, 'A founding father reflects', *Higher Education Quarterly*, 45 (1991), 311–32; Asa Briggs, *Special Relationships: People and Places* (London, 2012), 106–27, esp. 107 where he explains that when he was first appointed to the UGC he was a Professor at Leeds, Keith Murray (Chairman of the UGC) had wanted an arts professor from a civic university and he fitted that bill. His translation to Sussex in 1961 gave him a 'unique position inside the UGC' as 'the only voice of a new university' but he was not appointed to the UGC in this capacity.
- 52 John Wolfenden, *Turning Points: The Memoirs of Lord Wolfenden* (London, 1976), 154.
- 53 NAS, SEP12/166, Siting of Universities: Proposed advice from Scottish Departments, Outline of Headings of Advice to be Submitted to the University Grants Committee, Scottish Development Group, Feb. 1964
- 54 The Advisory Panel on the Highlands was a consultative body established in 1947 in an attempt to settle demands for a regional development body for the region, demands which had been voiced since the abolition of the Congested Districts Board in 1912. It proved to be a talking shop, although a distinguished one and its records, mostly in NAS, SEP12, are a valuable source.
- 55 NAS, SEP12/196, Advisory Panel on the Highlands Meeting 29 May 1964, Note for Chairman of Development Group.
- 56 *Inverness Courier*, 15 May 1964.
- 57 NAS, SEP12/194, Copy of a letter from Robert Wotherspoon, Chairman, and Mr James Cameron, Clerk, North of Scotland Sponsoring Committee, 23 Jan. 1964.
- 58 O'Dell was the Professor of Geography at Aberdeen, his main interest was in transport, especially railways but, with his colleague Kenneth Walton he had published *The Highlands of Scotland* (London, 1962) in the 'Regions of the British Isles' series published by Thomas Nelson. He died in 1966.

- 59 NAS, SEP12/26 Development Group Meeting, 1 May 1964
- 60 Hutchison, *University and the State*, 98–109; I.G.C. Hutchison, 'The University and the State', in J. D. Hargreaves & A. Forbes (eds), *Aberdeen University, 1945–1981: Regional Roles and National Needs* (Aberdeen, 1989) 111–12.
- 61 N. Mitchison, *Saltire Self Portrait, Number 2* (Edinburgh, 1986), 29.
- 62 NAS, SEP12/4, Minutes of the 102nd Meeting of the Advisory Panel on the Highlands, 29 May 1964.
- 63 NAS, SEP12/204, Western Isles Crofters' Union, College of Crofting and Resource Management Studies (A paper presented by Dr Alister Fraser, Executive Committee member of the Union); see also Advisory Panel on the Highlands and Islands: Further Education in the Highlands and Islands: Note by the Scottish Education Department, October 1963.
- 64 For some interesting comments about Barron and the pre-eminence of the Courier as 'The Paper' in Inverness see the testimony of R.W. (Billy) Munro in Ian MacDougall (ed.), *Voices of Scottish Journalists: Recollections by 22 Veteran Scottish Journalists of their Life and Work* (Edinburgh, 2013), 137–8. Mr Munro was editor of the *Highland News* from 1959 to 1963.
- 65 *Inverness Courier*, 12 May 1964.
- 66 TNA: PRO, UGC7/239, Evan M. Barron to John Wolfenden, 13 May 1964.
- 67 *Northern Chronicle*, 3 April 1963; see also 30 October 1963.
- 68 *Highland News*, 10 Feb., 17 Mar. 1961, 26 Oct. 1962; 10 May, 4, 18 Oct. 1963.
- 69 TNA: PRO, UGC7/239, R.J. Adam, Memorandum in support of a proposed university in Inverness, 7 Dec. 1963; Professor Lionel Butler (Medieval History, University of St Andrews) to Wolfenden 24 Nov. 1963; Wolfenden to Butler, 26 Nov. 1963; the phrase 'growth point' (or 'growth pole') was much used at the time in theories of economic development – the idea was that by using the facilities of the state to stimulate growth in particular geographical areas it would then ripple out to more remote districts; the early HIDB used this approach, especially with regard to the area around Inverness and Easter Ross.
- 70 TNA: PRO, UGC7/241, Supplementary memorandum by the North of Scotland Sponsoring Committee to the UGC in connection with proposed erection of a new university in Scotland, 27 Dec. 1963.
- 71 TNA: PRO, UGC7/244, New University in Scotland, Visits to possible locations, 5 Jun. 1964; *Highland News*, 8, 15 May 1964.
- 72 TNA: PRO, UGC7/240, Report from Sub-Committee on New Universities, 18 Jun 1964
- 73 TNA: PRO, UGC7/242, L.S. Sutherland, Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, to Wolfenden, 27 May 1964. Lucy Sutherland was an historian of the eighteenth century and principal of Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford. She had served in the Board of Trade during the Second World War and in the post-war period was often called upon to sit upon enquiries and commissions on diverse public questions. She was born in Australia and had highland family connections on her father's side. See Anne Whiteman, 'Sutherland, Dame Lucy Stuart (1903–80)', rev. *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/31738>, accessed 13 Jan. 2014].
- 74 TNA: PRO, UGC7/244, Proposed new University locations, maps produced by the Scottish Development Department, April 1964.
- 75 *Higher Education*, 162–3
- 76 R.D. Kernohan, 'New University Horizons: II – Lowlanders in a Highland Setting', *Glasgow Herald*, 16 Dec. 1960; D. Kemp, 'Difficulty in Recruiting Staff in Remote Regions', *Scotsman*, 13 Jun. 1964; *Inverness Courier*, 8 May 1964.
- 77 TNA: PRO, UGC7/240, Report from Sub-Committee on New Universities, 18 Jun 1964
- 78 *Higher Education*, 153.
- 79 *Highland News*, 24 Jul. 1964.
- 80 *Inverness Courier*, 31 Jul. 1964.
- 81 TNA: PRO, UGC7/244, Robert Wotherspoon to Wolfenden, 14 Aug. 1964.
- 82 R.G. Bomont, *The University of Stirling: Beginnings and Today* (Stirling, 1995), 1–2.
- 83 Wolfenden, *Turning Points*, 154.
- 84 Paterson, *Scottish Education*, 155–9.
- 85 The HIDB did make some preliminary investigations into the idea of a University in its area, see NAS, SEP12/558, HIDB: Possible University or other development in Inverness. Note by W. Russell, 10 Feb. 1966.
- 86 TNA: PRO, UGC7/244, Robert Wotherspoon to Wolfenden, 14 Aug. 1964.

- 87 Highland Archive, C262, New University, Notes of Proceedings at Meeting in Inverness, 11 Dec. 1970; Sponsoring Committee Meeting, 27 Jan. 1971.
- 88 Highland Archive, C262, Sponsoring Committee Meeting, 19 Feb. 1971.
- 89 Highland Archive, C262, PA Management Consultants Ltd, The 'preparation of a case for a highland university', Report to the Sponsoring Committee for a Highland University, July 1971.
- 90 Highland Archive, C262, L.R. Fletcher (UGC) to Cllr MacLeod (Inverness Town Council), 25 Feb. 1972; John Hill to Robert Grieve 7 Mar. 1972.
- 91 Highland Archive, C262, Grieve to Hill, 13 Mar. 1972.
- 92 James Hunter, 'The Gaelic revival', *Times Education Supplement (Scotland)*, 7 May 1976, 23; Roger Hutchison, *The Waxing Moon: The Modern Gaelic Revival* (Edinburgh, 2005) deals at length with the foundation and later history of Sabhal Mòr Ostaig.
- 93 Anderson, *British Universities*, 163–75.
- 94 Ewen A. Cameron, *Impaled Upon a Thistle: Scotland since 1880* (Edinburgh, 2010), 315.
- 95 Lindsay Paterson, 'Scottish higher education and the Scottish Parliament: the consequences of mistaken national identity', *European Review*, 6 (1998), 459–74.
- 96 Paterson, *Scottish Education*, 164.